

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 8243

STADIS////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, IS, XF
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH WEIZMAN ON MISTREATMENT OF ARAB
PRISONERS

REF: STATE 145827, STATE 155007

1. I HAD A STRAIGHT TALK WITH WEIZMAN JUNE 29 ON ISSUE
OF MISTREATMENT OF ARAB PRISONERS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRI-
TORIES, A DISCUSSION WHICH A MOD STENOGRAPHER CAREFULLY
TOOK DOWN VERBATIM. MAKING IT OBVIOUS THAT I WAS READING
FROM A PREPARED PRESENTATION, I TOLD HIM THAT WE HAD HAD
A NUMBER OF REPORTS OF ARAB PRISONERS BEING SERVERLY MISTREATED
DURING INTERROGATIONS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. ALTHOUGH
WE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT SUCH PRACTICES REPRESENTED ISRAELI
GOVERNMENT POLICY, THE REPORTS WERE TOO NUMEROUS AND CONSIS-
TENT TO BE DISMISSED.

2. NOTING THAT THESE REPORTS WERE LIKELY TO BECOME
PUBLIC IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I STRESSED THAT ISRAEL'S
HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WOULD BE SEVERELY BLACKENED UNLESS
IT TOOK SERIOUS AND CONCRETE STEPS TO ELIMINATE WHATEVER
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UNATHORIZED MISTREATMENT MIGHT BE OCCURRING. PRO-FORMA
DENIALS WOULD SIMPLY NOT SUFFICE.

3. I THEN MOVED TO CENTRAL OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING. I
NOTED THAT INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS ACCESS TO DETAINEES
UNDER INTERROGATION HAD BEEN USED BY ISRAEL TO UNDERPIN
ITS DEFENSE OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. HOWEVER, ACCORD-

ING TO THE RED CROSS, ICRC REPRESENTATIVES DID NOT GAIN ACCESS TO DETAINEES UNTIL THE 14TH DAY AFTER ARREST, AND MOST OF THE ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OCCURRED WITHIN THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS. IT WAS THUS UNPERSUASIVE FOR THE GOI TO MAINTAIN THAT RED CROSS VISITS TO DETAINEES UNDER THESE CONDITIONS WAS EVIDENCE THAT NO MISTREATMENT OCCURRED.

4. REFERRING TO THE IMPENDING ICRC/GOI NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE REVISION OF THE TERMS OF THE ICRC'S ACCESS TO DETAINEES, I EMPHASIZED THAT THE EARLIER RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES COULD VISIT DETAINEES, THE BETTER. EARLY ACCESS COULD BE USED TO SUPPORT AND LEND GREATER CREDIBILITY TO ISRAEL'S DEFENSE OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. ALTHOUGH HAL SAUNDERS, ON THE SECRETARY'S INSTRUCTIONS, HAD DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT WITH BAR-ON IN WASHINGTON, AND I UNDERSTOOD TAMIR WAS LOOKING INTO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ICRC COULD BE GIVEN EARLIER ACCESS, I TOLD WEIZMAN I WANTED HIM PERSONALLY TO KNOW HOW SERIOUSLY THE U.S. VIEWED THIS MATTER. WE WERE NOT RAISING THE SUBJECT TO CONDEMN OR PASS JUDGEMENT ON ISRAEL, BUT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO ISRAEL'S REPUTATION WHICH THESE REPORTS POTENTIALLY POSE AND THE NEED FOR THE GOI TO TAKE VIGOROUS AND CONVINCING ACTION TO COUNTER THEM.

5. WEIZMAN SAT THROUGH MY LENGTHY PRESENTATION IN SILENCE, INTERRUPTING ONLY ONCE TO ASK IF I HAD DISCUSSED MISTREATMENT WITH DAYAN. (I TOLD HIM I HAD, BUT NOT RECENTLY)

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WHEN I CONCLUDED, HE RESPONDED EARNESTLY AND WITHOUT RANCOR. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY SINCE A BOMB HAD GONE OFF IN A WEST JERUSALEM MARKET ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE MY VISIT, KILLING TWO AND INJURING 37 ISRAELIS.

6. UNDERLINING THAT HE WAS TRYING TO BE WATCHFUL ABOUT THIS ISSUE, WEIZMAN ALLEGED THAT HE HAD NOT HAD ONE COMPLAINT MADE TO HIM DIRECTLY RECENTLY ABOUT PRISON MISTREATMENT OF ARABS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. HE HAD IN THE PAST WEEK SEEN THE MAYORS OF NABLUS, RAMALLAH AND HEBRON AND NONE OF THEM BROUGHT UP THIS ISSUE. NOR HAD THEY RAISED IT WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNOR. AT THAT POINT HE AGREED WITH THE INTENT OF MY INTERRUPTIVE QUESTION WHICH INDICATED SKEPTICISM THAT ARAB NOTABLES WOULD MAKE SUCH COMPLAINTS DURING WHAT WAS CLEARLY A GOODWILL VISIT TO THE AREA ON WEIZMAN'S PART. EVEN SO, WEIZMAN COULD NOT RID HIMSELF OF THE FACT THAT AS HE SAID, NO ONE HAD CHARGED THAT "A SON, A COUSIN OR A BROTHER HAD BEEN BRUTALIZED IN DETENTION." HE ADMITTED THAT IT DID NOT MEAN IT DID NOT HAPPEN, BUT NO ONE HAD COME TO HIM.

7. RESPONDING, I TOLD WEIZMAN THAT AS I UNDERSTOOD IT THERE HAD BEEN NO SHORTAGE OF PRISONER COMPLAINTS WHICH HAD BEEN

FORWARDED THROUGH THE RED CROSS TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT.
THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE REACTION BY THE GOI ALWAYS SEEMED
TO BE A PRO-FORMA DENIAL. WEIZMAN SAID HE WOULD CHECK
AGAIN. HE WRONGLY NOTED THAT HE HAD MANY COMPLAINTS HE
COULD MAKE AGAINST THE ICRC, BUT ADMITTED THAT WAS NOT
THE ISSUE AT HAND. HE SAID HE DID NOT SUPPORT SUCH BRUTALITY,
BUT HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT SOME PRISONER WERE NOT
"GETTING THEIR BACKSIDES KNOCKED IN BY SOME SONS OF BITCHES."

8. AT THAT POINT ILAN TEHILA, WEIZMAN'S AIDE, BRIEFLY
LEFT THE OFFICE AND RETURNED WITH SEVERAL SHEETS OF PAPER
WHICH, WEIZMAN EXPLAINED TO ME, CONTAINED COMPLAINTS BY
18 ARABS ABOUT MISTREATMENT, IN PRISONS. HE SAID HE WAS
LOOKING INTO THOSE CHARGES, AND HOPED I COULD SEE THAT
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IT DID NOT TAKE A VISIT BY ME TO ELICIT CONCERN ON HIS PART.
LOOKING AT THE LIST, AND PRESUMABLY THE ACCUSATIONS, WEIZ-
MAN MENTIONED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY CERTAINLY AT THAT MOMENT
THAT ALL THE CHARGES WERE GROUNDLESS. HE COULD NOT
AFFIRM, "WITHOUT PRECISELY KNOWING" THAT THE ISRAELI RECORD
WAS 100 PERCENT PURE. BUT, HE SAID "PRISONER DO COMPLAIN."

9. WINDING UP THE CONVERSATION, I REMINDED WEIZMAN THAT
HUMAN RIGHTS WAS A SUBJECT OF GREAT SENSITIVITY BOTH FOR
THE PEOPLE OF THE U.S. AND FOR THE ADMINISTRATION. THE
COMING VISIT BY U.S. REP. TO THE U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSIONER MEZVINSKY WAS ONLY ONE INDICATION OF THIS.

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 08243 02 OF 02 301106Z
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EXDIS

THE BEST WAY FMR ISRAEL TO INSURE THAT ITS REPUTATION WAS NOT UNFAIRLY TAINTED BECAUSE OF THESE ACCUSATIONS WAS TO TAKE EXTRA STEPS TO END ANY MISTREATMENT THAT WAS OCCURRING. IT HAD BEEN SHOWN THROUGH THE BEIT JALA AFFAIR THAT DENIALS BY HIS PEOPLE WERE NOT ALWAYS ACCURATE. WEIZMAN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD, IF HE FOUND "ANYONE MISBEHAVING," HE WOULD "CLAMP DOWN ON THEM". I NOTED I WAS PLEASED TO GET HIS COMMITMENT, AND CONTINUED THAT THERE WER TWO THINGS I THOUGHT HE PERSONALLY COULD NOW USEFULLY UNDERTAKE. HE COULD LOOK INTO INDIVIDUAL CASES. AND HE COULD USE HIS INFLUENCE TO MOVE THE GOI TO A DECISION TO ACCEPT EARLIER ICRC ACCESS TO ARAB PRISONERS. WEIZMAN SAID HE WOULD "SEE WHAT WE CAN DO."

10. AFTER THE MEETING, I FOLLOWED UP ON WEIZMAN'S EARLIER SUGGESTION TO TEHILA THAT WE MIGHT HAVE A COPY, IN ENGLISH, OF THE REPORT THEY HAD EARLIER REFERRED TO IN THE MEETING. TAHILA PROMISED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH GEN. ORLY, MILITARY GOVERNOR OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, AND GET US A TRANSLATION.

11. COMMENT: IT WAS A GOOD MEETING. WEIZMAN TREATED
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A SERIOUS ISSUE SERIOUSLY AND DID NOT SUCCUMB TO WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN A TEMPTATION TO DISMISS MY DEMARCHE IN AN EMOTIONAL OVERHANG FROM THE BOMB INCIDENT EARLIER IN THE DAY. I THINK HE WILL TRY TO BE HELPFUL, AND I HOPE THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD, WHICH I READILY AGREED BE TAKEN, WILL BE WIDELY CIRCULATED IN THE GOI. NOW THAT MISTREATMENT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED AS A SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN WEIZMAN AND ME, I WILL TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD AND GO BACK TO HIM IN A COUPLD OF WEEKS TO FIND WHAT HIS INVESTIGATION HAS UNCOVERED. WE CAN SEE THEN WHAT THE BEST NEXT STEP ON OUR PART WOULD BE.
LEWIS

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